

An On-Farm Education Approach to Directly Marketing

“The Other White Meat”

Location of Project: Honokaa, Hawaii (Western Region)

Purpose: One of the primary goals of the project was to be able to utilize high quality hogs in ways other than selling a few live animals off the farm. By changing their marketing approach and opening an on-farm “Educational Store and Visitor Center,” the producers hoped to increase their production and sell more market-ready hogs to the local ethnic market. The “Educational Store and Visitor Center” was designed to educate visitors about the importance of pork to the local culture and inform them about the differences between local pastured-raised pork and mainland pork.

Accomplishments: The producers involved in the project opened an “Educational Store and Visitor Center.” With the help of publicity in the local community, the producers gained recognition as a source of high quality, locally-produced, pork products, and customers expressed a lot of interest in the farm and the pork products they manufactured. Throughout the duration of the project, customers were asked to fill out a comment form. The responses on those

forms helped the producers better accommodate the needs of the customers. Tracking the types of pork cuts and products that were sold most frequently proved to be a good way to determine what needed to be kept in stock. The results of customer evaluations were as follows:

- 100 percent of the store's visitors said that they would recommend the on-farm pork market to friends and family.
- 95 percent of the store's visitors purchased pork from the store during their visit.
- 95 percent of the store's visitors felt that their visit gave them a better understanding of the differences between local pork, mainland pork, and natural pork.
- 90 percent felt that the traveling distance to the farm was insignificant.
- Nearly all of the customers felt that the following items were extremely important when purchasing pork: the price of pork, location of the origin of the pork, the feed type (swill or grain), and farm recycling and sustainability.

Lessons Learned: The results of the project suggested that it would be highly effective if an educational program were incorporated into the on-

farm pork market, so that youth who visit the facility on tours would be given the opportunity to learn where pork comes from and how it gets to the table. Also, creating and offering a greater selection of specialty processed products at the store could be expected to increase sales and profits.

Conclusion:

The project has the potential to influence other livestock producers, who look to expand their market. By finding successful ways of cultivating markets for pasture-fed, locally-raised pork, farmers and ranchers in Hawaii may have the opportunity to eliminate the costs of importing livestock feed from the mainland.

The comment form served as an excellent means to realize the store's potential, by allowing the producers to monitor and respond to the needs of local consumers in a timely manner.